

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes  
September 15, 2021, 8 am – 9:30 am  
Virtual Meeting Minute Taker: Audrey Ng

**Members present:** Ilana Bebachick, Leah Beckett, Holden Cookson, Catrina Damrell, Shirley Elliott, Debby Galef, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Janet Mosley, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Mary Verhage

**Members absent:** Debby Knight, Scott MacGrath, Laura Nichols, Quinten Steenhuis, Kristen Watkins

**Staff Present:** Deb Albenberg, Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, John Fitzgerald, Mike Orr, Kevin Richardson, Karim-Ben Saunders.

**Public present:** Dailey Brannin

## 1. Housekeeping

- New quorum is 11.
  - Lindsey, Rob, and Suzanne have chosen to move on from the RAC
    - Dailey Brannin from Harvard Facilities team may attend informally to lend a perspective from Harvard
- Summer recap
  - Richard: Conducting an experiment with grandchildren on (non) compostability of PLA (“compostable” plastic). Will report back.
  - Meera reported on plastic milk bags that are now being recycled in India <https://www.thebetterindia.com/261987/the-milk-bag-project-how-to-recycle-plastic-packet-viral-social-media-mumbai>.
- The June minutes were approved
- Leadership role elections will take place in October
  - Secretary and Co-Chair seats open
    - See descriptions of each position on page 2 of the September Agenda.
- Circular Cambridge from the Department of Economic Development has hired Metabolic (metabolic.nl) as a consultant to create a Circular Economy Roadmap
  - Very conceptual at this point, but great opportunity to be working with the Dept. Economic Development. Universities are involved as well.

## 2. City Updates

- Composting returned May 17, 2021
  - Has not reached pre COVID tonnage
    - Not necessarily correlating with higher trash rates
    - Peak trash rates were up 15% during COVID
  - DPW team talking to households next week with no green bins out
- Small business compost pilot starting November 8!
- RAC letters sent June 9, 2021 to Commissioner and City Council
  - Single Use Ordinance - could see next step in 6 + weeks
  - Trash barrels - Comments from City Council were supportive

- Thank you RAC Members who commented during the June council meeting!
  - Public forums on the topic coming in December
  - Still planning for spring roll out
- Markets are very favorable for recycling right now
  - Massive Texas freeze also froze new plastic production - helped market
  - Paper is up in tandem with lumber shortage
  - Glass is weak as is standard, but makes up about 20% of our recycling
  - HDPE is most valuable and versatile
- Recycling Discussion:
  - Holden: Truth about recycling campaign? Share facts about the industry and bust common myths
  - Diane: Are the inflated prices for virgin materials helping change behaviors? What happens when these prices rebound?
- Volunteer opportunities for upcoming community events (outdoors) - fewer than in the past
- Textile recycling program getting close to launching
  - Helpsy bins at some parks and schools as well as curbside collection option
  - Aiming for soft launch in November 2021, then ramp up in Spring 2022
- Sakiko: What is the recommendation on using kitchen sink disposals?
  - Discouraged in the City of Cambridge as it can clog sewer system and cause million dollar repairs.
- Diane: How can we prevent maggots in the compost?
  - They will disappear once the weather cools down
  - Try keeping food waste in the freezer until collection day
  - Add mediums to help reduce moisture in your compost: coffee grounds, compostable papers. Maggots are a natural part of the composting process.

### 3. Sub-Committee & Goal-setting discussions

- Do we want to keep the current three subcommittees: Analytics, Reuse, Food Waste?
- Subcommittee updates:
  - Analytics: Survey draft was submitted to Mike, plan to deploy in October 2021. Goals: Evaluate how data is presented on the DPW website.
  - Reuse: Three members have departed. Could this Subcommittee be re-envisioned? Sakiko suggests a Rodent Subcommittee.
  - Food Waste: Continuing with the Monthly Newsletter. Goals: Explore how we can increase readership (#1 Click last month!) and reflect the diverse Cambridge population.

### 4. Action Items

- Reimagining the Reuse Subcommittee
- Mike will talk to Bonnie-May in Economic Development about joining a future RAC meeting to talk about the circular economy
- Mike to share list of upcoming community events and volunteer opportunities

## 5. Closing

- Fill out Doodle for Fall social - Time is 5:15pm
- Please sign up to be a [Meeting Minute Taker](#)
- Introducing some DPW staff:
  - Meryl Brott: Recycling Program Manager. She works with the schools and educates on recycling and composting programs.
  - Deb Albenberg: Works with composting program and is tackling multi-unit residential and commercial composting.
  - Kevin Richardson: Compliance Officer. Oversees trash compliance, mattress disposal, community educator.
  - Camilla Elvis: Recycling Outreach Assistant. Works at events and presents to the community to provide education and encourage engagement.
  - Karim-Ben Saunders: Solid Waste Assistant. Oversees hauling and deliveries as well as fielding questions on solid waste issues.
  - John Fitzgerald: Environmental Services Manager. Oversees the street cleaning, solid waste collection program and works closely with recycling staff.
- Public Comment: None